



Dr. Jacqueline Clanton, Dr. Mary Craig – friends for 30 years

The Promised One Has Come!

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The Jewish people had no word from a prophet for some 300 years, but they had prophecies of a promised Messiah going back to the beginning: God to the serpent, Genesis 3:15. **And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.** Those who believed that the Living God would keep His promise and fulfill the prophecies looked forward to a Messiah coming, a Deliverer, a Savior, the Anointed One, the Just One, the Christ.

And then, something amazing, something miraculous. One by one those prophecies were coming to fulfillment. Mary was found with child of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 1:18) Mary had a visitation; Joseph had a dream. This child would be a son whose name was to be Jesus, for “He shall save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21) He would be Emmanuel, God with us.

John wrote this: **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...In Him was life; and the life was the light of men...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:1,4,14)**

We are in the season of celebrating the birth of Christ, our Savior and Lord. Jesus grew, living the life of obedience and righteousness required by God, His Father. He died on the Cross, was buried, and rose again the third day, the Federal Head of a new humanity. But He was despised and rejected of men who did not believe in Him or believe Him or believe what He believed. One such man was Saul of Tarsus.

Saul of Tarsus, Pharisee of the Pharisees, was zealous to remove Christians and Christianity. He is identified with this city on the southeastern tip of Asia Minor, close to Antioch and North of Jerusalem. His father was a Roman citizen and merchant, so Saul was born free and a Roman citizen. Tarsus was on trade routes, a wealthy cosmopolitan city, with the largest university in the world, bigger than Athens and Alexandria. Saul of Tarsus followed the tradition of learning a trade, tent making, but at age 13 he was sent to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel [Gamma-lay'-el], the leading Jewish theologian. By c. age 21, Saul had the reputation of being the most educated Jew in the region, was well known around Jerusalem, and present at the stoning of Stephen.

Saul's profound hostility would make him a terrorist, as we would say today, infamous, and full of hatred against believers in Christ. He consented to the death of Stephen, and people laid Stephen's clothes at his feet. In God's eyes, evil was being done, and Saul did nothing to stop it. That's cowardice. Aiding and abetting is a capital crime. But Saul was blind to it and considered himself justified in his stance.

Then, after seeking and receiving papers authorizing him to go and rout out Christians in Damascus, he encountered the radiance of Christ's glory, a radiance that blinded him on the road to Damascus. He gives his testimony of this event three times in the Book of Acts; let's listen to it first from Acts 9:1-9. But what does that have to do with us and Christmastime?

Every believer can celebrate the coming of the Promised One by laying hold of truth revealed to Saul of Tarsus (Paul) in his call, commission, commandments from Jesus, and the promise to show him "the Just One."

THE CALL: SAUL, SAUL

Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.³ As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.⁴ Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"⁵ And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ^[a]It is hard for you to kick against the goads."⁶ So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:1-6a NKJV)

Saul encountering Jesus is intensely personal.

Jesus is alive! To persecute Christians is to persecute Jesus.

Electing love and the grace of God can touch and transform even the chief of sinners.

THE COMMISSION: Then the Lord *said* to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."⁷ And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.⁸ Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into Damascus.⁹ And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. (Acts 9:6b-9)

So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, '**Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.**' (Acts 22:10)

I was blind, but now I see. Jesus is the Light shining into the darkness.

It is time to “Arise and go...”

For three days, blind, Saul neither ate nor drank. He was blinded, hungry, and thirsty. He was in the dark, humbled. Blindness would disqualify him from the synagogue (Leviticus 21:18, e.g.) He will call himself the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). But the testimony of God’s grace and electing love is not over.

Ananias, a devout man, was sent to Saul, who also was given by Jesus that Ananias would come and put his hand on him, that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Ananias calls Saul “brother.” Saul, who will be known as Paul, was healed within the hour, got up and was baptized.

But the Lord said to him [Ananias], “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children^[e] of Israel. ¹⁶For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” (Acts 9:15, 16)

¹⁴Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.¹⁵For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’ (Acts 22:15-16)

THE COMMANDMENTS:

Receive sight.

Be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the Name of the Lord.

Be the chosen vessel of Christ as He has declared you to be, His instrument, His implement.

Bear the Name of Jesus before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

Know the will of the God of our fathers who has chosen you.

See the Just One.

Hear the Voice of His mouth.

Be Jesus’ witness to all people of what you (Paul) have seen and heard.

Open the eyes of Jews and Gentiles that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.

Be obedient to the call, commission, and the commandments of your mission, to the Voice of God’s mouth.

Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus for a purpose.

Before King Agrippa, Paul testified of his call, commission, and commandments from Jesus in Acts 26:16-19.

¹⁶ But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen Me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷ delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’ ¹⁹ “Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. ESV

THE PROMISE OF GOD:

I will show him (Paul) how many things he must suffer for My Name’s sake.

I will appear to you.

I will deliver you from your people and from the Gentiles.

Paul did not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. (Galatians 2:21) Salvation comes by grace through faith in the Promised One. (Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 4:16; Genesis 3:15)

Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. Romans 4:16

Do not frustrate the grace of God. Salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, the Promised One/Messiah, not by the Law/law-keeping. (Galatians 2:21; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 4:16; Genesis 3:15)

Paul understood the Good News that Jesus was sent by the Father to save. Jesus lived the life of obedience actively, a Son of the law, on our behalf. He died on the cross, bearing the curse, bearing the penalty for sin, bearing the wrath of God, and bearing the glory of God. He rose from the dead as proof that the Father accepted the offering of His life. Jesus is alive. Paul testifies to what he heard and saw. Paul preached this gospel.

In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all true believers are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28.

Paul was transformed by the electing grace of God, called to be an apostle; called, anointed by the Holy Spirit, and sent on a mission and with a message.

The Just One would speak to him. Jesus Christ is the Just One, the promised Messiah, the Holy One of Israel. Jesus is that Holy One and Just. Habakkuk 2:4. Paul will BE a witness of all he has seen and heard. Acts 1:8. He is considered by theologians as the greatest theologian, missionary, evangelist, pastor, and man transformed by grace. He will speak of the Just One, setting forth “The Just shall live by faith.” He will know nothing but Christ crucified, preaching and teaching and exhorting the atoning work of Christ who lived a perfect life of obedience to God His Father, who died and took the penalty of the law for sin, who bore the wrath of God, who Himself was the sacrifice for sin, who redeemed the elect by the Blood of the Lamb, who defeated Satan, destroying his works of darkness. He will call people out of darkness, as he had been. He will open the eyes of the blind that they might be transformed by the radiant glory of the light of Jesus Christ. He will fight the good fight of faith to the end.

Jesus Christ is the Just One, the Promised One who came into this world, sent by His Father, to save a people for Himself. In Nazareth, Jesus stood up in a synagogue to say, The Spirit of the

Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18)

May the Living God open our eyes to see the glory of Christ in all His fullness and be gracious to us to open our hearts and minds to Him and His Word. Celebrate His coming! He is coming again. Amen.

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